



## 2004 Flu Vaccine Shortage

Half of the nation's flu vaccine will not be delivered. A major manufacturer of flu vaccine, Chiron, will not be distributing any influenza vaccine for this flu season. SC Department of Health and Environmental Control is working to assess what this news means for South Carolina. There is no influenza disease circulating now. South Carolina's first confirmed influenza case is usually not reported until late November or early December.

### Who should be vaccinated?

Because of the vaccine shortage, the existing supplies will be reserved for people who are at greatest risk from serious complications from influenza disease.

Everyone in this group should seek vaccination:

- People 65 years of age and older
- Children ages 6 to 23 months
- Adults and children who have heart disease, asthma, and other chronic disorders of the pulmonary or cardiovascular systems
- Pregnant women
- Adults and children who required regular medical follow-up or hospitalization during the preceding year because of diabetes, kidney diseases, blood disorders, metabolic disorders, immunosuppression, including HIV/AIDS, and other chronic diseases
- Children and teenagers who take aspirin on a regular basis
- Residents of nursing homes and other chronic-care facilities
- Household contacts and out-of-home caregivers of children under the age of 6 months. (Children under the age of 6 months cannot be vaccinated.)
- Healthcare workers who provide **direct care** to patients.

### Who should forgo vaccination?

Healthy people between the ages of 2 and 64 should not get their annual flu shot this year. We need to conserve the available vaccine to protect those at greater risk.

### What about the nasal vaccine, FluMist?

FluMist, the intranasal flu vaccine, is a viable option for healthy, non-pregnant 5 - 49 year old individuals who are contacts of infants under 6 months of age or are health care workers who provide **direct patient care**. FluMist is **not** recommended for health care

workers taking care of severely immunocompromised people requiring a protective environment.

## **What else can you do to protect yourself and others from the flu?**

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze – and dispose of the tissue afterward.
- If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.
- Clean your hands after you cough or sneeze – with soap and warm water, or an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- If you have a respiratory illness, you should avoid visits with other people or consider using a special facemask especially if you must visit someone who could become seriously ill with influenza.
- Consider asking your doctor about antiviral medications to prevent influenza.
- Several medications can be used to protect against influenza. Some of these medications are not active against all types of influenza virus and some cannot be used in children. Your doctor will help determine which medication may be best to help protect you against influenza.
- If you get the flu, avoid exposing others. Stay home from work or school.

SC DHEC will be monitoring influenza activity to determine when it arrives in each region or county of the state. Please check the DHEC web site at [www.scdhec.com](http://www.scdhec.com) for the latest influenza surveillance.

## **What if you are in a high risk group and your clinic has no vaccine?**

You should try to get vaccinated.

SC DHEC is assessing the vaccine situation right now and trying to make sure that as many high-risk people as possible will eventually be able to go to either their regular provider or a flu shot clinic to get the vaccine.

## **What happens if a healthy person gets the flu this year?**

During most years, between 10 percent and 20 percent of the population of the US get the flu. Children get the flu more often than healthy adults. Most healthy people who get the flu will go through a period of illness for several days with fever (usually high), headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, and muscle

aches. Children may also have nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. Sometimes, cough and tiredness can last for 2 weeks. Almost all healthy people will have a full recovery. It is important to remember that the great majority of healthy people will not become severely ill with the flu.

If you have questions or comments about this page, call 1-800-277-4687 for the SC DHEC Immunization Division, Bureau of Disease Control.